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IVAN'S LOVE - QUEST

AND OTHER POEMS

MALCOLM CHARLES SALAMAN

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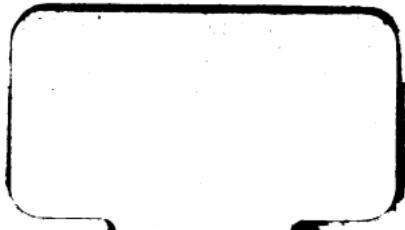


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To Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

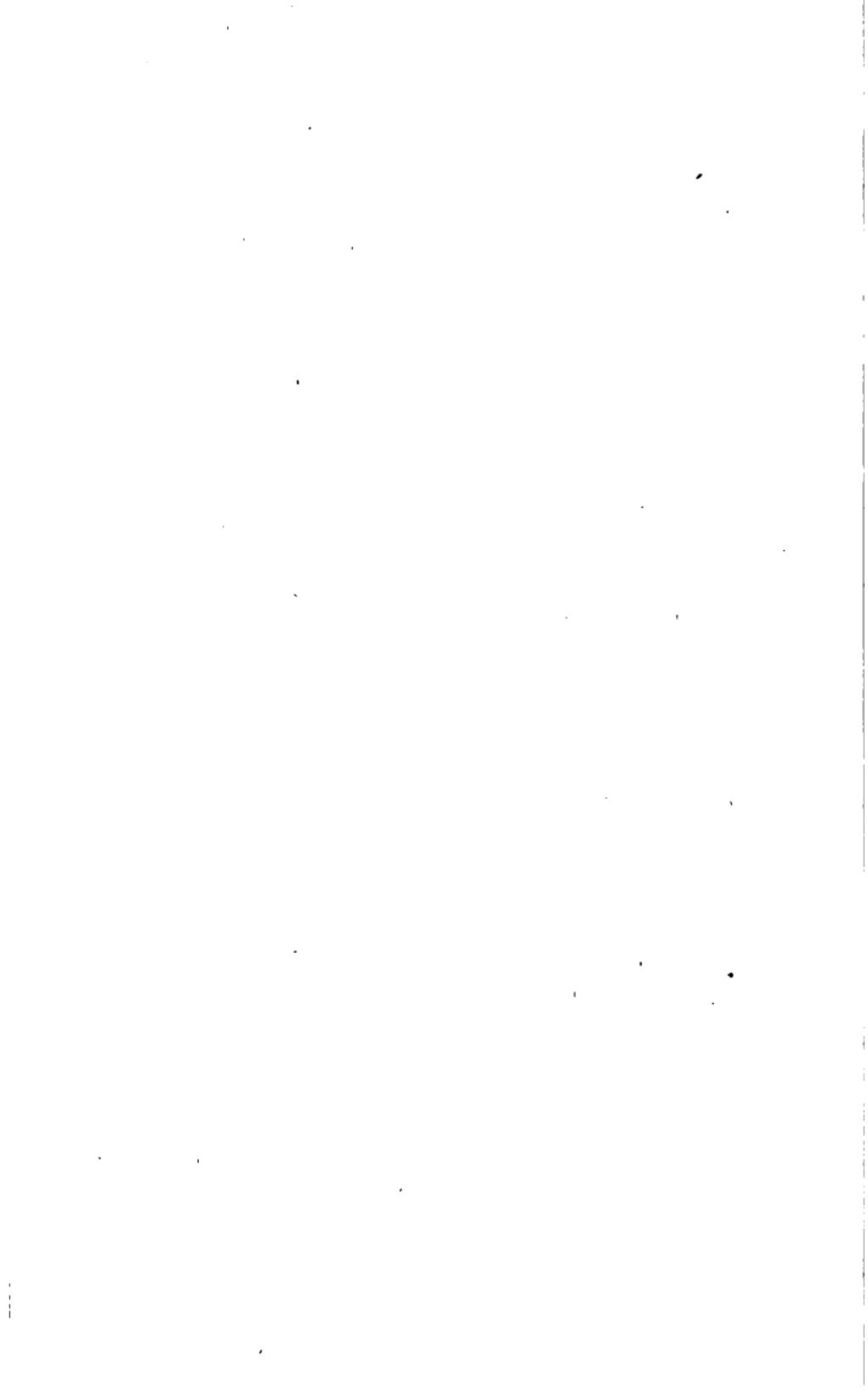
When song first called me, my whole life was lost.
The world seemed all too fair for crossed desire.
I heard the larks & nightingales above,
And felt the freedom of the feathered choir.
But now three years have taught me your
That life's no dream, but has its stern decrees
^{soo' truthe}
So I feel old, ere yet I've spent my youth,
With rude awakenings from my dreamful ca.

Poet, who by your simple strength of song,
Have found a home in all our English hearts,
Wafting your vigorous Western air along,
To give us strength to bear in toilsome
parts;
I come with these my boyhood's songs to you,
Even as a son kneels at his father's feet
To own a fault, and crave advice anew.
I'll dream no more, but, living, make
life sweet.

Melchor Charles Salaman

September 6th
1881

IVAN'S LOVE-QUEST.



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IVAN'S LOVE-QUEST

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

MALCOLM CHARLES SALAMAN.



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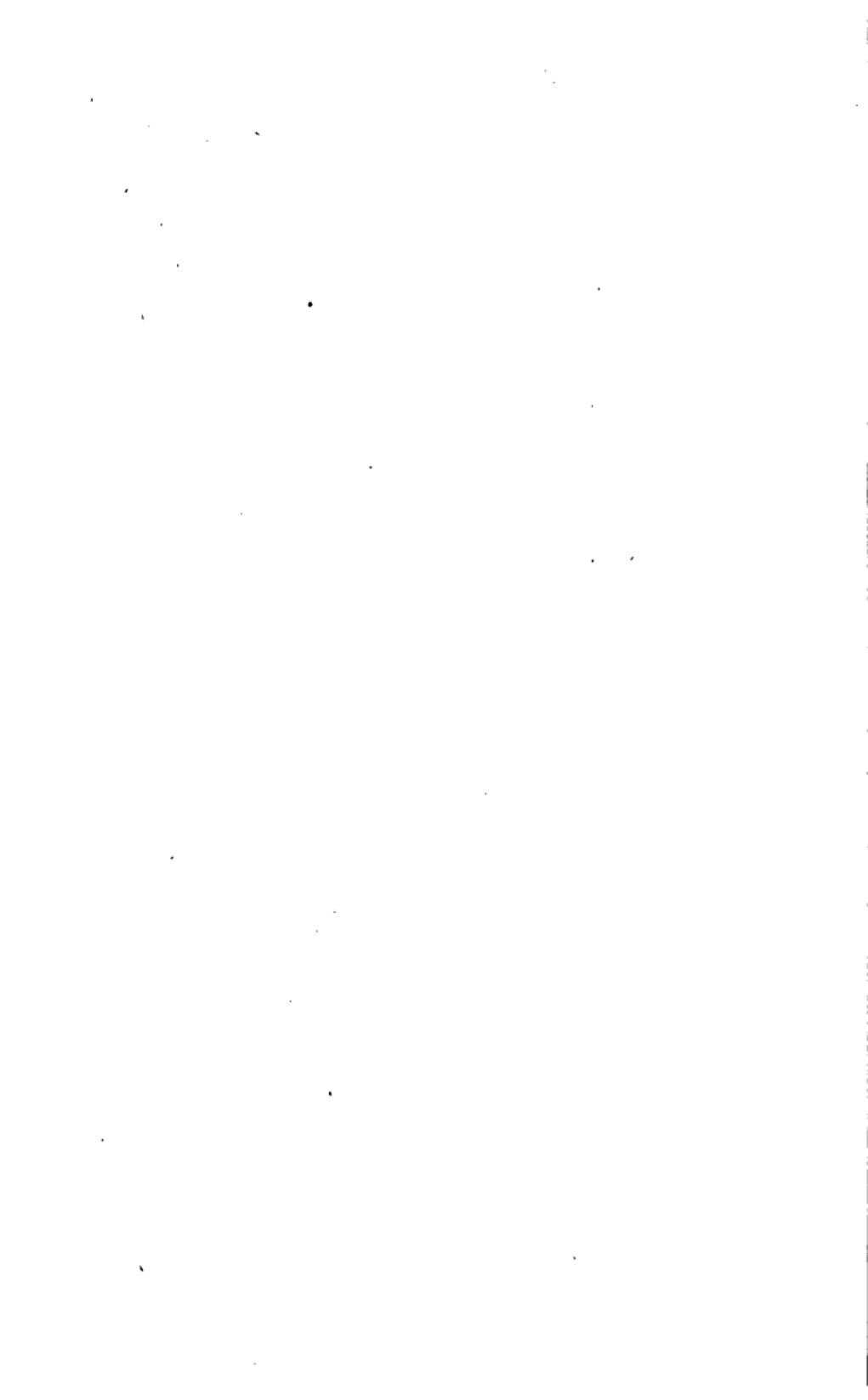
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TO
M Y F A T H E R ,
I DEDICATE
THIS, M Y FIRST BOOK.





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IVAN'S LOVE-QUEST.

Come, all young hearts, and sail with me
Over the infinite blue sea
Of perfect love. There shall ye find
An island fanned by many a wind
Blown from the lips of Heaven ; there
The rapture of the perfumed air
Finds vent in music of rare birds,
And sounds, beyond the power of words
To tell their hidden meaning, fill
The flowers that bend to the wind's will.

'Twas to this isle, as I may tell,
There came three maids, led by the spell
That one same fair-limbed youth had wove
Round each one's heart, and called it love.
Now, each maid thought his only bliss
Lay in the rapture of her kiss,
And little deemed the words that she
Had listened to with such sweet glee
Had e'er before found listeners
In any other ears than hers.

So, knowing nothing to destroy
The perfect summer of her joy,
She lay amidst the thick-grown grass
And heard the half-voiced breezes pass,
And strange sweet music of the streams
Fell on her ear and brought her dreams ;
And as she lay without a stir
The mists of sleep enveloped her.

Now so it chanced, that to this isle
Made lovely by the Love-god's smile,
A maiden, fair as morning, came
Speeding along like fleetest flame ;
And after her, in hot pursuit,
A youth full tall and fleet of foot :
The same whom those three maids had heard
Speak to their hearts the honeyed word
Of love's sweet rapture, and who had
Made each one for a time so glad.
She whom he followed as none ran
Since Atalanta cut the span
Of life for those love-maddened men
Who raced with her for love's sweet gain,—
She bounded on like any hind,
Her loose hair lying on the wind,

And ever and anon would she
Relax her swiftness, so that he
Might feel faint hope within him rise
Of closing with her ere the skies
Should darken over them and veil
Her from his sight ; then, like a sail
Caught by the wind, her veins would swell
Beneath her swan-white skin, and well
Would she outstrip him in the chase.
Still went they on at such a pace,
That, though he had been fain to stay
And take delight along that way
Of every fair and lovely thing
They passed in their swift travelling,
He needs must follow and pass by,
Unheeding all the beauties nigh.
Thus they ran on so strong and fleet
As though swift wings impelled their feet.

Now, when they passed the greensward where
The three maids lay all white and fair,
And in the cool tree-shadows slept,
From each maid's eyes sleep quickly crept,
And left them gazing at the pair
That stirred the hot and languid air

With their swift running. All the three
Then rose up like a sudden sea,
And strained their unbelieving gaze,
Being fain to hope the dreamy ways
They had been wandering brought this sight
To check excess of their delight ;
But soon they saw it was in vain
To hold such hope, for it was plain
These were no sleep-imaginings,
But real as any living things.
Then each maid from the other tried
Her heart's deep flutterings to hide,
And sudden changing of the cheek
From red to white,—all signs that speak
The subtle secrets of the heart.
But when they saw he made no start
At seeing them, nor even smiled,—
But still ran on,—they all grew wild,
And sobbed, and made no secret more
Of that which hurt their hearts so sore.

Still heedless as a passing wind,
He fleeted by, nor looked behind
To give one little loving glance
To each maid for sweet sustenance ;

For she, the maiden he pursued,
Was entering now a mazy wood,
And he might lose her from his sight
Did he not follow on her flight
With greater speed, and end the race
In that intricate leafy place.
But when he to the wood's edge came
Thrice loudly did he call her name,
For though he made great search around,
He saw her not, nor even found
Her footprints on the leaf-strewn ground.

So, hot and breathless from the race
He stopped bewildered for a space,
Scarce knowing where to turn or look ;
When suddenly, as from the brook
That runs half-hidden by the trees,
Whose branches reach with graceful ease
From bank to bank, there rang quick notes
Of singing-laughter, such as floats
Through Heaven when some weary soul,
Thinking to find there rest from dole
And perfect peace, is but allowed
To rest a short space on a cloud

In sweet forgetfulness, until
It wakes transformed at Nature's will,
But part of this world's being still.
He heard with strained and ravished ear,
And felt the laughter, like a spear,
Pierce to his soul ; for well he knew
The liquid mocking tones,—and who
But she at whose feet he had lain
His heart could mock him for his pain ?

He pushed the tangled boughs aside ;
Then, with one swift and sudden stride,
Leapt down on to the bank below,
Just where the shallow waters flow,
And there, upon a mossy stone
That stood out in the stream alone,
He saw the maid, who, with soft grace,
Over the waters bent her face,
And laved therein her hands and feet
To cool them from the racing heat.
Now, when she saw the youth appear,
She gave no shuddering sign of fear,
But raised herself to her full height,
And flashed her eyes' defiant light,
Then swiftly re-commenced her flight.

She leapt into the water ; then
Climbed up the steep sides of the glen,
Sweeping from rock to rock as swift
As snow-flakes in a windy drift.
Ivan no sooner saw her start
Than, breaking branch and fern apart,
He straight pursued her with a dash,
And stirred the brook with splash on splash
Until he reached the other side ;
When, gazing up the glen, he spied
Her once more vanish from his sight ;
But soon there reappeared the white
Of her loose garments clear between
The tree-stems and the under-green.

So in this way they ran and ran,
Until the evening dew began
To fall upon the leaves and flowers,
And wash the air with unseen showers.
When, having travelled far, at length,
Weary of foot and failing strength,
They came upon the open sea,
That lay in all its majesty
Of rolling waves and glittering spray,
Red with the fading glare of day.

Upon the bosom of the deep
One golden cloud, as if in sleep,
Lay languidly, and was close kissed
By the fast rising evening mist ;
Then through the twilight silence rang
A sudden sweet symphonious clang
Of silver trumpets in the air,
Which gave forth melodies so rare
That all the heavens seemed to be
Aloud with angel's minstrelsy.

After a while the splendid feast
Of that delicious music ceased,
And then a wingéd voice, so sweet
That Heaven's own choir could scarce compete
Therewith, was borne upon the breeze
To bring such luring words as these :—

“ Ye that love liberty,
Ye that are free,
Will ye not sail with me
Over Love's sea ?
We shall float lazily ;
Moments shall flee
Sweetly and dreamily,
Sweet as can be.

Birds shall sing joyfully,
Loving, like we,
Things of the earth and sky,
Flower and tree.
Will ye not sail with me
Over Love's sea ?

" Ye that are loved of me,
Ye that are free,
Fair to eternity,
Fair shall ye be,
If as the sea-birds flee
Ye will make sail with me,
Singing in harmony,
Over Love's sea ! "

The singing ceased, and then there gleamed
Between the mists a light that beamed
With rarest glories of the sun
A little space of sea upon,
Showing a graceful golden boat
That on the placid waves did float.
The hull was wrought with strange device
Picturing Love's own paradise.
The figure-head, a wingèd love
Fondling a piteous wounded dove,

Was carven out of ivory,
The purest that could ever be.
The sails were of a silvered silk,
The masts of coral, white as milk.
A youth was standing by the helm,
So fair, that of some unknown realm
Of untold loveliness he seemed,
And from his perfect form there beamed
A perfect soul, that yearned to be
At one with all humanity.

The pair that now had run so long
Had heard the trumpets and the song
With strange enchantment and delight ;
But now were spell-bound by this sight
That fell to them of loveliness
Beyond all mortal ken or guess.
The maiden stood upon the beach,
Where the white foam could almost reach
Her dainty feet, and her loose hair
Hung heavy on the salty air.
The laughter faded from her eyes,
Like cloud-flakes out of summer skies,
And left them set at steady gaze,
Drinking deep joy-draughts from the haze

Of golden ecstacy that played
About the senses of the maid.
Ivan, who raced with her for love,
Stood mute upon the cliff above.
Amazement stayed his eagerness
From pushing onward with a press
Of pulses leaping with desire.
While, for a moment, all the fire
That burned within his breast grew chill,
And in his brain all thought stood still,
For very wonder of the scene
He saw in all its mystic sheen.
Him-seemed as though in deep of dreams
He lay, and let the lurid gleams
Of fancy play across his sleep ;
And the enchantment sunk so deep
Into his love-absorbéd mind,
He scarcely heard the passing wind
That echoed wave-songs from the sea ;
So wildered by the scene was he.

Now to the shore the boat drew nigh,
And, where the broken waves washed high
The slanting beach with foam, it stopped ;
Then the sad wind-song quickly dropped

To the faint echo of a sigh,
And nought was heard beneath the sky
Except the back-wash of the surge
Dragging the pebbles in a gurge,
And the loose flapping of the sails,
That rested now from winds and gales.

While still the maid and youth stood there,
Like two birds poised in middle air,
On expectation's eager wings,
Waiting some change of those fair things
That held them mute, as though a spell
From heaven on their two souls fell,
The god-like figure in the boat
Arose, and from his song-filled throat
Poured out these words of silver song,
That sailed the evening air along :

“ I am the priest of Love,
That beauteous god, whose presence floats
Through earth below and heaven above,
Who sounds the deepest notes
In the deep souls of men and things,
And fills their fountain springs
With beauty's essence ;
While through his presence

He sheds sweet harmony divine
Over the yearning Universe,
And makes all lovely life combine
To wipe away Jehovah's curse.

“ Over the sea I sail
For ever through the countless years,
Striving to drown the human wail
With music from our spheres ;
And shedding showers of golden grain
On barren beds of pain,
Thereon to bloom
Despite the gloom ;
Making men glad with sense of life,
And all things fair beneath the sun ;
That end may be of war and strife,
And man and nature be at one !

“ Love is a lenient lord ;
Sweet maid, wilt thou not give thy soul
To serve him both in deed and word,
That death-bells ne'er may toll
Thy beauty's sorrowful decay ?
For should life fleet away
Without some fruit
Of thy life's root,

To bear thy likeness after thee,
Then were thy life but half fulfilled.
I pray thee, therefore, sail with me,
To seek the fate that Love has willed !

“ Fair youth, thou must remain
Here in this love-land wandering,
Till thou art purged of all the pain
Thy fickleness did bring
To those three maids who, trusting thee,
Gave their hearts' constancy.

Thou shalt go back
Along the track
Thy hopeless passion led thy feet ;
Back to the woodlands all in flower,
Where One shall make thy life complete
With love and song each jewelled hour !”

No sooner had he ceased than he
Leapt, with a fawn's agility,
Into the spent foam on the beach,
And thence his eager arms did reach
Towards the maid who yearned to him.
Then there arose a weird and dim

Sea-vapour, which enveloped them—
As some dull cloth might hide a gem
Within its folds, most rich and rare—
While he, unseen, did swiftly bear
Her through the water to the boat,
Which then, once more, he made to float
Beyond the white wave-breaking line.
Anon the mist cleared, and the shine
Of golden glory gleamed again,
And centred on these lovely twain ;
While slowly with the wakened tide
The graceful boat began to glide.

Still Ivan stood upon the shore,
And blankly gazed the prospect o'er,
When, suddenly, his senses woke,
As from the spell at last he broke,
And, bounding from the rocky ledge
Down to the water's furthest edge,
He loudly hailed his ruthless fair,
That she might not forsake him there
In that bare spot of cliff and sea,
With only for dull company
The songless storm-birds seeking rest.
Then wildly did he beat his breast,

And give full tongue to his desire,
Seeing that all his words of fire
Fell on charmed ears that would not burn.

Only the wind, that seemed to yearn
For human sympathy, had heard
His speech ; a mellow-throated bird
Had filled the maiden's ears with song,
To drown the fret of Ivan's tongue.

The golden light now slowly died,
And darkness, like a ghost, did glide
Over the waters and the land,
Till Ivan, standing on the strand,
Could see the Love-priest's boat no more.
So, wearied utterly and sore
At heart, he turned his face away
From where the awful night-mists play
Across the dark, sad, wailing sea,
Before the moonbeams are set free.
With laggard steps he then went back
Along the lately trodden track,
Which he must travel now alone,
Until his heart's sad monotone
Should blend in joyous harmony
With some one heart's glad melody.

He wandered on until his strength
Quite failed him, and he reached at length
A grassy glade, o'ercanopied
With many spreading trees, that hid
The purple sky from all beneath.
Here Ivan, sickened nigh to death
With his most fruitless passion-quest,
Lay on the grassy bed to rest ;
And soon a moonbeam, peering through
The trees, made sleep to fall, like dew,
Upon his weary lids, that they
Might ope refreshed at break of day.

So when the first grey morning light
Rose up above the dusky night,
And made the air all sweet and crisp
With budding life—the low soft lisp
Of leaves and flowers, that now were stirred
By every little waking bird
That gaily fluttered his light wings
For gladness that the morning brings ;
Ivan awoke, and all the sky
Broke into flower with ecstacy
Of the new sun, while all below
Thrilled gladly with the golden glow.

It could not be with all so glad
That Ivan's heart should still be sad ;
So every smile of Nature brought
To him some sweet reviving thought
Of what the Love-priest told to him.
And now, refreshed in every limb
By his long sleep, he once more set
His steps inland-wards, with some fret
For his lost fair one still at heart.
But by degrees his soul took part
In the glad singing of the birds
That told of love in formless words ;
And then hope put forth buds to bloom
Into one flower of lovely doom.
And thus new longings now possessed
His very being, and suppressed
Vain pining for his shadow-love.

At length he wandered to a grove,
Where choicest flowers of every hue
In semi-shaded sunlight grew ;
And many a blushing passionate pair
Of youthful lovers lingered there,
Whose glad looks told the great delight
They had in one another's sight.

But many maidens, dark and fair,
And many lovely youths were there,
Who wandered singly and alone,
With hearts that made a constant moan
For lack of love ; and Ivan spied
Among these Mildred, the dark-eyed—
One of the three whom yesterday
He passed unnoticed on his way.
But now that he had found too late
How vain had been his strife with Fate,
And how all-swaying is Love's power,
His heart cried out for some new flower
Of love ; and so with earnest words
He strove to play upon the chords
Of Mildred's heart, that they might send
Some soothing melody to blend
With his heart's music ; making both
Their lives grow glad with new love's growth.

But she, with anger-flashing eyes
And bosom heaving ocean-wise,
Spoke thus, with bitter mocking words
Tempered to wound like venomous swords :
“ Ha, ha ! Have you not toyed enough
With that most bitter plaything—love,

That now, your last game being lost,
You once more seek the heart you tossed
Aside but yesterday, perhaps
To tire of after one hour's lapse?
I can but laugh to think how soon
The full and fair but fickle moon
Of love is lost behind a cloud;
While all the words of passion vowed
Beneath its light are wasted flames.
And yet I heard the honeyed names
You called me, and was glad for them,
Thinking I had the precious gem
I deemed your love! But not too late
I know you false, and graft deep hate
Upon my heart to mark the grave
Of all the passionate love I gave.
Go now! and may my hate and scorn
Haunt you like furies night and morn!"

Ivan, whose heart alternately
Leapt wildly and was still, as she
Flung forth these tongue-darts, spoke no word,
And turned as though he had not heard;
Leaving her standing there enraged—
Like some wild creature newly caged,

That beats itself against the bars
To tameness—sore and sick with scars.

So Ivan turned away to hide
His pity for the maid, whose pride
Had so far gone from her, that she
Had bared her heart and let him see
How much she prized his love, and yet
Would sooner bear the pain and fret
Of hating him, than yield her love
To soothe him with the sweets thereof.
And then once more he went his way
Alone, while all the woods were gay
With mating of the flowers and birds,
And merry frisking of the herds
Of graceful antelopes and deer,
And all that breathed Love's atmosphere.

The unquenched yearning at his heart
To make his unloved life a part
Of some sweet harmony of love,
Caught every flying joy, and strove
To pluck therefrom some seed of hope.
So climbing down a wooded slope,
At foot of which a glassy lake
Lay dozing, while the roll and break

Of wavelets told that in the deep
Of calm some dream made sweet its sleep,
He saw another of the three
Neglected maidens—Bertha—she
With blue-grey eyes that ever seemed
To peer for things whereof she dreamed,
And amber hair that fell adown,
In wealth of locks, her olive gown.
She sat there listlessly and mute
Upon a tall tree's spreading root
That overhung the lake, wherein
Was mirrored all that lay within
The perfect wonder of her face.
Her body bore a weary grace,
Her fingers plucking wantonly
The petals of a rose, while she
Turned skyward her abstracted gaze.

Ivan approached her through the maze
Of tangled underwood and trees,
The while his heart had little ease
Of hope, as he drew nigh to her ;
For she nor smiled nor made a stir
To greet him, though she saw him clear.
But yet he poured into her ear

His heart's whole story, hoping still
The Love-priest would his words fulfil.
But she turned round her weary eyes
Upon him with a strange surprise ;
And said : " Why come you to me now
With piteous speech, to tell me how
Your guideless heart has gone astray
Upon Love's boundless windy way ?
For now the love that once I gave
Is dead and cold within its grave,
Never to breathe again the breath
Of cruel life—far worse than death.
And now you are no more to me
Than is a ship that skims the sea
To the deep waters 'neath the waves.
The lambent stream of love that laves
The verdant heart of joyous youth,
For me is now dried up forsooth.
Yet though you did me wrong, God knows
I bear no hate ; the killing snows
Of pride have frozen all my heart
Against new passion's hottest dart !
The dreamy calm of this fair lake,
Girt with green woods that ever wake

With echoes of the nightingale,
To me is lovelier than the wail
Or rapture of man's love ; I find
No voice that soothes me like the wind."

She ceased and turned away once more
To gaze on dreaming as before.
But Ivan spoke : " Fair Bertha, thou
Art quite content with snow-time now,
Because the snow is soft and white,
And falls upon thy heart so light.
But when the night-frost hard and keen
Bites where the sun's kiss once hath been,
Thy heart will deaden and grow numb,
And when the sun once more shall come
To kill the frost, the melting snows
Will swamp thy heart, that ne'er a rose
Nor any flower of hope shall bloom
Again upon its bed of gloom ! "

When he had spoken, seeing she
Was still unmoved, nor listened, he
Turned quickly from her and pursued
His way along the singing wood.
Not long he journeyed ere he saw
A marble gate without a flaw,

Arched in with branches closely twined,
And flowers that never knew the wind.
He opened this, and entered there
A lofty grotto; broad and fair,
Down whose steep crystal sides there fell
Cool fountains; while there rose a swell
Of many voices echoing
Through all the place sweet chorusing.
And many men and women there
Stood, sat, and walked without a care,
For all were glad to live, and wrought
Each one for all in deed and thought.
As Ivan passed along, his soul
Knew no more loneliness or dole.

Not long it was before he spied
Fair Beatrice on the other side;
She was the last of those three maids
He left among the woodland glades.
Her features wore the tender smile
That makes a woman lovely, while
Her bright eyes laughed like two sun-beams
That play across a captive's dreams.
She wrought, with all the other maids,
Fair robes of many diverse shades,

And time to them no burden seemed,
For while they worked hope always gleamed.
Now Ivan, when he saw this thing,
How all were happy labouring,
Began to work too, that he might
Make life more lavish of delight.
When he had laboured some time there,
And seen that Beatrice grew more fair
And joyous with each day that passed,
He knew his heart had found at last
A resting-place in her's for aye,
And thus he spoke to her one day :
“ Beatrice, I come to lay once more
At your fair feet my heart's true core.
I'm weary of vain wandering ;
Though once I dreamed that I could wing
Through all the upper unknown skies
That canopy Love's paradise ;
But when I first essayed to soar
Higher than I had known before,
The air would not sustain my flight,
For I was weak, and held love light.
Now I have fed upon the seeds
That make life fruitful of fair deeds,

And so I am content to stay
Here by your side, till you shall say :
‘ Ivan, I love you ! The green earth
Love's not so much the new spring birth
With its return of flowers and birds,
As I do now to hear your words,
That tell of your return to me.’ ”

While he thus spoke, a mystery
Of maiden blushes fired her cheeks,
Like sinking sun's all-spreading streaks—
And with a voice, whose liquid notes
Would shame the song from skylarks' throats,
She answered him in this sweet wise :
“ Ivan, the glad sun never dies
Because the darkness veils his face ;
The lily loses not her grace
Because she droops in winter snows ;
And so I knew that, sure as flows
The river of eternity,
Your heart would soon return to me
With love the stronger for its flight.
And all the while from my delight
Of loving you I never failed,
But every time the night-sky paled

Before the blushes of the morn,
I listened for your dear voice borne
On waking flutters of the breeze.
And now my soul has perfect ease
Possessing you—”

“ Stay, kiss me, Sweet!”

He said : “ My life is now complete ;
And henceforth all of my delight
Shall be to stay in your fair sight,
And do great deeds of love and good.”

Then they went out into the wood
Beyond the grotto, while the night
Fell, and the moon's sweet mystic light
Filled all their being with a sense
Of heaven attained and love intense.

BIONDINA.

I would not tell you, Sister, of this thing,
This bitter thing that fell on Love and me,
But that your voice tells such sweet sympathy,
I fain would hear it sweeter for a sigh.

I know you will not cast me from your sight
When I have told you all, for you have felt
Perhaps, as I, how narrow are the bounds
The laws of men prescribe for play of love,
And how the walls are high and hard to pass ;
And if you e'er have felt the great desire
Which fastens on the flesh, and makes the soul
Too strong to curb its vent, you will be loth
To punish me with frowns for this my pain.

It chanced this way. My friend, my brother-friend,
Had wedded with the maiden of his love,
She whom he loved as only great souls can ;
But she had scarce turned woman, and knew not
But that Love's face was passing fair to see,
And that his lips were very sweet to kiss.

She had not fathomed yet the wondrous depths,
Nor learnt the hidden mysteries of Love's eyes,
For her young soul had never felt their spell.

So for a time she lived with him, and loved
Just as a child loves, passionless and free,
Taking each momentary joy that comes,
Just as a bee that flies from flower to flower.
But soon, as time went by, there came a change,
And she would wander vaguely through Love's
land,
To find fresh beauties to make fair her life ;
But never in her wanderings could she see
Her husband's face reflected in or stream,
Or lake, or river ; but, instead, a face
She had not seen or known ; and thus she grew
More restless day by day, till over her
There stole a strange sweet longing, which ere
long
Possessed her being. Then it was that first
Amando brought me to her presence ; then
In that full flower-time of love, when so
His heart was full of summer, that no sign
Of unresponsive love could reach him there.

Ah, how shall my words tell how fair she was ?
For now that all the sights mine eyes can see
Are but the pictures which my memory paints,
Though time has toned the colours, still this one
Fair image is so pictured on my brain,
That with no labour of fine skill, I see
Her just as when I gazed on her that day.

'Twas June, and Summer played at love with
earth ;
The air was heavy with the mid-day heat,
And no wind wakened from its dreamless doze.
Amando led me to the garden, where
The fountains played, and where Biondina lay
Asleep. Ah, how shall I forget those curves
That made her form divine! Like one white cloud
That sleeps in beauty on its broad blue couch
She lay ; her hair that was like golden corn,
Made lovelier by the sun-light, in rich locks
Fell over her white shoulders, while one tress
Lay like a sun-streak o'er her bosom's waves.
One white arm pillow'd her fair sleeping head ;
The other like a long white lily lay
Along her side.

Amando went to her
So tenderly, as though he would not wake
Even the air that slept about her face ;
But when he softly pressed his lips to hers,
She made a sudden start, and oped her eyes,
Then raised herself upon one hand, and gazed
As though dreams held her still ; but when he
spoke
She seemed to waken from another life,
And looked quite scared upon him ; then she
turned
Her eyes on me. Ah God, what eyes they were !
Though light of outer things has gone from me,
And life to me is but a burial house,
With only memory's sombre lights around,
Her look is still the one star peering through
The deathly darkness there.

Biondina stood
Before me, while her bosom rose and fell
Quickly, like wavelets when a breeze springs up.
Her small mouth quivered like a dainty rose
Between whose petals breathes the gentle wind.
I felt a thrill run through me, for I read
In all those subtle signs one great glad sign
Of recognition ; though I knew not then

It was my face she saw in every stream
 She had bent over in Love's dreamy land.

We three sat down together in the shade
 Of a cool arbour, where the graceful grapes
 Hung in rich clusters overhead ; and then,
 After some playful talk, Biondina sang.

Though I have often heard the lark since then
 Pour out its spotless soul in heavenly song,
 Her notes have never faded from my ear.

It seemed as though her woman's soul had now
 First won its way to light, and chosen song
 To pilot it. These were the words she sang—

“ The Spring with gifts of flowers
 Came with the bright young year,
 And every sweet and gladness
 That drowned the dead year's sadness,
 And cool, refreshing showers,
 And birds' songs loud and clear.
 But though Spring brought the flowers,
My love was not yet here.

“ The golden days of Summer
 Girdled the glad mid-year
 With garlands of red roses
 And many-coloured posies,

And gave each weary comer
A swallow's song to cheer.

But though we had the Summer,
My love was not yet here.

“ The Autumn with its tender
Red tints of leaves grown sere,
Gives sign the year is waning ;
While those few flowers remaining
Give what sweet they can render,
Then slowly disappear.
Still Autumn is more dear
Than Spring-time young and tender,
And all the Summer’s splendour,
For now my love is here.”

’Twas but a simple love-song,—nothing more—
Such as the peasant-folk are wont to sing,—
Yet how it stirred my soul ! Amando sat
Lounging—his head upon one hand—and gazed
At her, his great love speaking through his face ;
And yet he did not seem to feel a thrill,
As I did, run through all his veins deep down
Into his soul, and leave a burning there.
But I was waking to a new-found love,
While he had known the utmost joy thereof.

Ah, Death's strange mysteries are not more strange
Than Love's. Shall no one ever fathom them ?

The morrow and each following day we chose
Some lovely, tranquil spot o'erhung with leaves
To shade us from the glaring mid-day sun ;
And there Amando set his easel up,
And breathed the perfect splendour of his soul
Upon the canvas, till his soul's ideal
Grew into life beneath his dexterous hand ;
And one more beauty thus was born for men
To wonder at and worship as they would.
While he was painting, and Biondina plied
At some long woollen work of quaint design,
I read to them, perhaps, of ancient myths,
Or pieces from the poets old and new ;
From Dante, the imperial poet-king
Of Hell ; and Shakspeare, poet of all men ;
And England's younger singer, the divine
Shelley, who sang of freedom, love and right.
Or sometimes I would lie amidst the grass—
Face upwards to the sky—apart from them,
And give my own soul vent in song, like birds
That sing in high mid-air ; but mine would be
A deeper note than ever bird could sound.

Then as I lay there, carving out my dreams
In marble of my fancy, I would hear
Biondina's song swept on the languid breeze,
And it would give an impulse to my verse,
Which then would flow down swiftly, like a
stream
Down some steep mountain's side ; while every
thought
Became the joy which its expression gave.
In this fair way we passed the mid-year month.

And now it chanced Amando had to go
To paint a fresco in a church at Rome ;
And as the time must needs be seeming long
Ere he turned homewards, being loth to leave
His wife to solitude—he begged me stay
To guard her from all harm that chance might
bring.
(Ah, perfect faith of lovers strong in love !)

I loved Amando for his royal soul,
The man's that made the artist's great being true;
The artist's that made high the man's being great;
And yet I wronged him in the world's hard eyes ;

In God's eyes—since they see my inmost life—
I know I shall stand sinless, for the love
I bore Biondina was a great pure love,
And free from thought of sin. When she first
gave

Her word to wed Amando, she had then
Not yet passed childhood, and she played with
love

As with some fair new toy, until she found
That after all 'twas but a toy she had ;
And then she hungered for the real love
Which turns the child to woman all at once.
She found that love in mine ; for our two souls
Were like two sister winds that speed as one
On their swift course through heaven ; so she
took

My love as gift of God, and gave me hers.
And this was sin, if being true to Love
And self be sin. O bitter tongues of men !

Our joy was full and deep, and every day
We felt some glad new thrill of love, and lived
Each for each other through the summer days.
Ah me ! the white moon kissing the dark sea,

The blue sky longing for the red sun's kiss,
Were nothing to our love, which grew and grew
With every moment that our lives were linked.
Ah, how we loved no mortal tongue could tell !

There was a little wood near by the house,
Where every morning we would seek delight.
All kinds of flowers and juicy fruits grew there
Amongst a wealth of many-tinted shrubs;
And there were open spaces now and then
Amidst the fruit trees, where the warm sun
played

Through leafy branches that twined lovingly
With those of neighbouring trees, high overhead ;
And here we chose to sit, and sing, and dream.

Have you gazed ever on a beauteous thing
Until its beauty has possessed you so,
That you would fain destroy it—all your sense
Being wrought to such a pitch of ecstasy ?
For so it was with me; the more I gazed
Upon Biondina's form, the more I felt
Desire to crush it in my wild embrace,
That it might change into a part of me.

Well, in this season of sweet hopes and fears,
Rained on with kisses from the sun and moon,
We had delight of amorous dreamy days,
Till, soul with soul in closest bond combined,
We grew into one being, breathed as one,
And felt one pulse run through us, as it were.
O, Love, our lord and master, we were true
To thee ; but Fate was false to thee and us !

Two months had gone now since Amando went
To Rome. (Ah woe that it should be so soon !)
One day we two were sitting in the wood ;
The day was hot and languid, yet the birds
Sang sweetly in the tree-tops and were glad ;
The leaves made tender music with the air,
Through which faint breezes passed at intervals ;
At last I broke the silence which had reigned
Between us—silence which meant sympathy—
With song-speech welling from my inmost heart—
A passionate outburst from my soul's desire
Of love that made my nature strong and pure.
Biondina listened, then she threw her arms
About my neck, and kissed my willing cheek.
My love that only was a dream before,
Now changed into a thing of flesh and blood.

I madly took her in my jealous arms
And kissed her lips till they were glued to mine.
I held her for an instant thus, but then
The love I bore Amando came between,
And whispered *Honour*; and with sudden strength
Renewed, I beat the passion down. God knows
How hard it was, for all the love we knew.
Then suddenly we heard a quicker stir
Of leaves, and rustling in the bushes near ;
When, with hands clenched, and face all white
with rage,
Amando stood before us like a fiend.
His eyes were burning with a fierce desire
To do destruction—then a longing look
Came into them, but in an instant fled.
For he, with blinded eyes of jealousy,
Had seen but half, and thereby judged the whole.
He spoke no word. Biondina gave one shriek,
And clung more closely to me, blanched with fear.
Then ere we could recover from dismay,
He bounded like a panther on a lamb,
And tore her from my arms, took one long kiss,
Then swift as lightning plunged a dagger deep
Into her breast. Ah, God, that I should see !
She gasped, then gave a feeble cry, and fell

A lifeless corpse, the red blood spurting out
Defiling all her bosom's spotless white.

I gazed like one made powerless by some spell,
And could nor speak nor move. Amando stood
Quite calm ; the demon look had left his eyes,
And now his face bore one of calm despair.

He spoke but once : "*All things are over now.*"
His voice at last aroused me to a sense
Of burning life ; my brain, my flesh, all things
Around me burned ; the whole world seemed
aflame.

I rushed to where Biondina lay moon-white,
And took her in my arms, and kissed her dead
But all my kisses sounded hollow then.
A song-bird twittered gaily over-head—
Ah, God ! I shrieked, and cursed the world and
Thee.

Then in a frenzy, that I might not look
Again on any human-kind, that she
Might be the last fair thing I should behold,
I plucked the dagger from her bleeding breast,
And, dripping with her blood, I drew it straight
Across my eyes—then swooned, and all was blank.

Blind, blind, for ever, till the end ; no sun,
No moon, no stars, no sight of fellow-man.

The clear blue sky, the foam-flecked sea, the flowers,
Are now mere memories. Ah me ! how long
Must I endure this barren life—blind, blind ?

Amando no one ever heard of since
That day of death ; but some have said that now
There is a hermit living on the coast
Somewhere in Sicily—a sea-washed cave
His home ; and every night the mid-sea waves
Are moaning, he goes down and calls to them
To bring him back his love, his dead lost love.
But when the sun-light dances on the foam,
He wanders sadly o'er the wet waste sands,
And makes strange motion with his arms and
head,
As though he sees some sight he would not see,
And cries, "*All white—snow-white, save the red
blood.*"

Is there no end—no end ? May not my pain
Buy from eternity some special grace,
That I may once see heaven, seeing her,
Then fade from all existence like a sigh ?

Hark, Sister, is not that the vesper bell ?
Come, give your hand, and lead my blinded steps.
Would God that all my thoughts were blind as I !

SONG.

Faded are the roses
Now in my heart's garden ;
No new flower uncloses
Where my soul's sun doses ;
'All turn sere, and harden—
Death-wreaths for love-posies !

Give new seeds for sowing,
Sweet, since life is flowerless ;
Send your love-breath, blowing
Showers to speed their growing ;
So to make time powerless
With its ruthless mowing !

Then, when birds come winging
Through our lives' fair weather,
And new love-words bringing
In their vague sweet singing,
We shall bloom together,
Heart to heart close clinging !

WIND SONG.

Wind, wind ! stay for me, wind !
Ere the locks of the night unbind ;
Bear me, bear me over the sea,
Where no sorrow or pain may be.

Blow the spray about my face,
Ring your music in my ears,
Wild, yet with a nameless grace,
Sweeter than a June night hears,—
So you bear me over-sea,
Where men's lives are full and free !

Wind, wind ! sing to me, wind,
Strange glad song with a sigh behind
Making it mellow. I love your notes ;
And, like a wild lost soul that floats
'Twixt Hell and Heaven, hearing first
Shrieks from tortured souls in Hell,
Then the rapturous choral burst
Gladdening Heaven with its spell,
I shall let my soul adrift
Wheresoe'er your song shall lift !

Wind, wind ! lift me, wind,
Up to a realm that is unconfined,
Over the sea and beyond the skies,
Higher and higher, where no bird flies ;

There where life's a lovely dream,
Nursed to sleep at beauty's breast,
Moon-white all, and ne'er a gleam
From the sun to waken rest.

Bear me up to yon fair realm
On your song, with mine for helm !

Wind, wind ! hear me, wind !
Wild waves whiten and storms grow blind,
Clouds flit fast through the angry skies,
Suns are hidden, and daylight dies ;

Trees are torn up even as weeds,
Rocks are hurled from mountain heights.
These are all your wanton deeds,
Wind, then, take me on your flights ;
For I'd have my soul to be
Strong like you, unquelled and free !

A QUESTION.

Were you kind as you are fair,
 O my sweet,
I would sit and kiss your hair,
 At your feet ;
But your lips are proud and hard;
 And your eyes
Like some star's sweet lustre marred
 In the skies
By the darkening clouds that pass ;
 While your hair
Is like long rich golden grass
 Growing there .
Where the Love-god has his bower,
 And the sun
Kisses every leaf and flower,
 All save one.

'Neath rich growth of flowers and leaves,
 Out of sight,
One small violet grows and grieves
 For the light.
Would you tread me under feet,
 As they do
Tiny violets fair and sweet ?
 Say, would you ?



A SONG OF WELCOME.

Heart, thou art glad, my heart ; yet wherefore so ?
The first fresh sweets of summer are gone by,
And autumn's tender sadness draweth nigh.
The sun is gone, as all bright things must go—
Leaving on earth its golden after-glow.
Yet tell me, heart, are all thy tears drained dry ?
Thou laughest so.

O heart, once more to hear the voice of her
Who taught thee first that all the world is fair,
Who poured sweet balm on thee when thou didst
dare

To love unloved. Keep silence! Do not stir!
We'll send a song to be Love's messenger—
Love pure and free as winds and sea-waves bear.

Heart, sing to her!

Sweet Love has come this way
With many gifts and rare,
Strange singers from the air,
And sea-flowers from the spray;
But all these gifts are bare,—
Thou comest back to-day.

The lark soars high to sing;
I would that I were freer,
Then all the world should hear
My joyous welcoming;
And I would make thee, dear,
The loveliest living thing.

I thank our mother, sea,
Who brought thee on her breast ;
Each wind that blew thee west
I greet right gratefully,
And offer what is best
Of this large love of thee.

Say, wilt thou here remain ?
Thy days shall be one song
Of love thy whole life long ;
And life shall be no pain ;
For love shall grow too strong
To let thee part again.



A SONG OF PARTING.

The moon is climbing the purple sky ;
Each pale star gleams to its neighbour star ;
The night-wind utters a low faint sigh,
And nought is here the sweet calm to mar.
But we must say good-bye !

Birds will to-morrow spread wing and fly,
And meet their mates in the free blue air,
And sing together till night is nigh,
Then still together their nests will share—
But we must say good-bye !

The rose casts smiles to the lily high,
The violet plays with the primrose sweet,
The green moss nestles the rock-fern shy,
And trees stretch boughs other boughs to
meet—
But we must say good-bye !

The hill-streams sing as they ripple by ;
The winds enchanted arrest to listen,
And echoing lift their song to the sky,
While moonbeams glad on the small waves
glisten—
But we must say good-bye !

The sea's heart heaves in an ecstacy
Whene'er it washes the yearning beach ;
Ah, hear the pebbles, how glad they cry
To be once more in the sea's wide reach.
But we must say good-bye !

All stay together but you and I,
We only drift on the seaward stream ;
Would it were Lethe, where thought might die,
Or would we were drowned in eternal dream
But we must say good-bye !



RONDEAU.

The day is fair to love and sing,
So say the birds as they take wing
Upon the windless August air,
Here where the flowers and leafage share
The cool spray of some crystal spring.

Come maidens, stir your limbs, and bring
For our delight some beauteous thing,
Surpassing all your beauties rare.
The day is fair.

What if the angered gods should fling
Some cruel curse wherewith to sting
Your hearts to fury, and make bare
Your lovely lives, what should ye care?
Some bird would still come whispering
‘The day is fair.’

SOUL-FLIGHTS.

My body is here on the grass ;
Above me the branches are swaying,
While all the soft breezes that pass
 Laugh low to the leaves in their playing.
The birds as they flit through the sky
 Arrest now and then in their winging,
And dart to some tree-top near by
 To pour their sweet souls forth in singing.

To most men the wind's song is wordless,
 And bird-songs they scarce understand ;
Like woods that are leafless and birdless
 Their lives are—or deserts of sand.
My body is here,—but my spirit
 Is up with the birds on the wing,
And all things around it that hear it
 Are glad—and together we sing.

I sit on the neck of a cloud,
And sail the aërial ocean ;
The winds as they go sing out loud
To hail me with loving devotion.
I drift in the wake of the sun,
The wings of my soul are all golden ;
My race with the world is unrun,
To men I am still un beholden !

O Nature, O truest of mothers !
What thanks shall I give thee for this ?
The winds are they not my own brothers,
The clouds, too, my sisters in bliss ?
The heavens are free for my roaming
In rapture of moon or of sun,
Or tender sweet time of the gloaming.
O Nature, out there we are one !



TO MY FATHER.

Father, gazing here upon your picture,
Painted in your life's exuberant spring-time,
I that now am in my flowering season,
Open heart to you, and shew its blossoms,—
Blossoms of my yearning for things lovely,
And for love of you, my more than father,
You, whose tenderness made sweet my childhood,
And whose music set my man's heart singing.

Musing on what has been and what might be,
Here I watch the silent twilight stealing
O'er the blue of yon fair summer heaven ;
Yet though all things round are now in shadow,
Still your features smile down sweetly on me,
And I feel your soul on my soul breathing
Honeyed hopes of love and life hereafter.

I am weary waiting love that comes not—
Love of some sweet woman, who shall bring me

Ivy leaves of life to cling around me,
Clinging closer as time makes them stronger.
But I see my yearning ever fruitless,
For no heart replies to my heart's crying.
Now I feel like some lone shipwrecked sailor,
Drifting on a raft upon the ocean,
'Neath a sun that burns his brain to madness,
With a thirst that dries his tongue to parchment;
While he sees against the far horizon
Passing vessels, which he signals vainly,
Stretching hands, and shrieking to the sea-birds.
But the ships pass, and the sea-birds vanish,
And the sailor dies, unheard, unsighted.

Have you known, O father, have you ever
Felt that fever of the soul, that hunger
For some love it ne'er before has tasted,
Save in midmost passion of its dreaming ?
When your soul with Shelley's went out song-wards,
And his words from your heart drew its music,
Then were you not wild with sweet love-madness ?
And when Byron, with his burning passion,
Drew the song-blood from your heart for pastime,
Was not that your soul's exultant outcry ?

Father, can you understand that yearning,
That consuming yearning of the poet,
That his heart shall be unseen of all men,
Buried in one woman's heart, but deathless
To that woman only, while his world-soul
Cries to all the world to hear his singing ?
All my life is filled with such wild longings.

But my thoughts turn now to love of nature,
To the woodlands, satiate with the summer,—
With the fruits that fall from over-ripeness,
And the trees that droop being over-blossomed,
And the leaves that wail before their falling,
And the birds that rest amid the tree-tops,—
To the waves that lounge on languid oceans,
To the clouds that swoon across the heavens,
To the winds that whisper through the silence,
And the stars that sleep on beds of silver.

Now my soul is as an ocean, yearning
For the calm that follows after tempest ;
And I long for that faith, sweet and child-like,
In the justice of the laws that bind us,
Which makes care to sit so lightly on you,
And your heart as young as though years passed not

Good night, dear my father. I have shewn you
With what flowers to-night my heart is burdened—
Flowers that no hard stranger hand may gather;
Only you I shew them to,—you only.

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MY LAND OF DREAMS.

What sweet spell holds you here, my love,
Why will you not break free,
And mount the wing of some fair dove
Flitting across the sea,
To soar to yon far blue above,
Alone with love and me ?

No shrill wind wakes the silent air,
No cloud is in the sky ;
For all is sweet and pure out there,
Never a plaint or cry ;
All things are deathless there and fair ;
But here they fade and die.

Out yonder is my land of dreams ;
Shall we not thither wing,
To skim along its deep blue streams,
Hearing the thrushes sing ?
For there the sun for ever gleams,
And life has there no sting.

I often wandered there alone,
 But now I can no more;
They weary there of my heart's moan,
 And all the birds implore
That I shall sing in gladder tone,
 As I have done before.

But how can I be glad or gay,
 When you and I are twain;
When I am night and you are day,
 And our two paths have lain
Never together on Love's way,
 While each has separate pain?

Just once come to my land of dreams,
 And hear the thrushes sing;
Just once sail down those deep blue streams,
 Then O my heart shall bring
Such love, that you shall say there gleams
 Nowhere so sweet a thing.

IN A WOOD.

O love, my love, what have I done,
What have I said that this should be ?
Why should a spot be on our sun,
Why should a storm be on our sea ?

Our love is pure and great and free,
Why should men curl their lips with scorn ?
The earth is fair to you and me,
And life is sweet as early morn.

We know not sin, save what may be
In loves of leaf and flower that grow
Together in the sun, though we
Are fain to reap what love shall sow.

Yet love, if men look coldly on,
What matter ! we have still the free
Green moors to roam, till we have won
The fairer love-lands over-sea.

The ivy twines around the tree,
The planets circle round the sun,
And men admire : yet must not we
Twine soul round soul till we are one.

But is it just, that for one word
Unspoken, all our love shall be
A thing accursed, while every bird
May love—and still be fair and free ?

What do the old gods say to this
To-day, I wonder ; can it be
That they, so free to take love's kiss,
Can frown on love 'twixt such as we ?

Well, if we're cursed by gods and men,
Here is it fair beneath this tree ;
And if they drive us hence—what then !
We'll seek those love-lands over-sea.



WHITHER?

Dead! dead!
A soul is fled.
Whither, whither,
Has it sped ?

Hither, hither,
Cry the flowers:
It is ours,
Fairer grown
Since sweet showers
Softly blown,
Bore it hither.

Hither, hither,
Cry the birds
As they throng :
Hear its words
In our song.

Dead, dead !
Whither, whither
Is it fled ?

Comes a sound
From the sea :
Hither, hither,
'Tis with me
It has found
Rest, sweet rest.

Cries the earth :
At my breast,
Ever giving
And receiving,
Death and birth
Are as one.

Cries the sun,
Great and free :
'Tis by me
Life is given,
Hell or heaven
There is none.

A soul is fled ;
Whither, whither ?
Dead, dead !

Speaks the soul :
Everywhere
Through the whole
Lovely world
I am hurled.
Here and there
Taking root
In a flower
Or a fruit.
Babbling words
For an hour
With the birds
As they wing.
Making waves
Softly sing
As they flow.
Making tears
Shed on graves
Melt like snow.

Breathing love
In the breast
Of a dove,
As she hears
Some fond pair
Sweetly singing
Fleetly winging
Through the air.

Rest ! No rest.
Ever hurled
Here and there
Through the world ;
Ever ranging,
Ever changing.
Bodies breathless
Still are deathless.
What once is
Always is,
And has been,
And will be
Through the green
Eternity.

Dead ! dead !
Whither ? whither ?

BALLADE.

I do not ask you to love me, sweet,
Knowing your heart is abroad to-day ;
I only ask to lie there at your feet,
Watching the wind and your hair at play.
Watching your eyes as they turn this way,
Vying the blue of a southern sky ;
Waiting your lips till they part and say :
Rest here with me till you fail and die.

The pulses of summer in full veins beat ;
The soft wind sleeps on the new-grown hay ;
Yet seasons of pleasure take wing and fleet
Ere love can fetter their feet to stay.
But I will wait till the sun's last ray
Shall fade from the world, and the end draws nigh ;
For then perchance you will hear me pray
To rest with you till I fail and die.

When you are housed in my heart's retreat,
Whence never a leaf of delight can stray,
Where love shall weave us a winding sheet
To bind us twain until time grows grey,
No dart shall come from the world to slay
With bitter venom of slanderous lie ;
But Love shall sing us his deathless lay,
To rest with us till we fail and die.

ENVOI.

Queen of the summer and all things gay,
Speak to her soul that she hear and sigh ;
And send me word that at length I may
Rest there with her till I fail and die.



SONG.

I made a prison of my heart,
And chained there all my thoughts of love,
That thence they never more might rove,
Exposed to cruel snare or dart.
But they the while would weep and sigh
For freedom of love's boundless sky.

Now through the prison bars there came
Unconsciously, like little birds,
My lady's sweetest charms and words ;
When soon my heart seemed all aflame,
For, lo ! her charms had burst the chains,
And turned my thoughts to fiery strains.

These straightway through the bars then went
To pour their song into her ear ;
But she, alas ! refused to hear,

For 'twas unwittingly she sent
Her charms into my heart to free
My love-thoughts from captivity.

So now, like vagrants without nest,
They flit about my lady's heart ;
But still she bids them all depart,
Nor hope for shelter there or rest.
Yet though my lady's heart were stone,
I still must love herself alone.



MY SOUL'S OUTCRY.

Why is life so short,—why is death so long?

We sing but a song

And our lives are told,

And we are nothing but helpless mould.

Is it so, and shall this be the end?

Can we do nothing to mend

This sombre and terrible doom?

Are men no more than the flowers that bloom

For a season, then fade and decay,

While others shall have their day?

If so, then life is at best

But a tiring before a rest—

A rest that is only a bitter blank—

A pitiful endless blank.

While life is a brimming measure

Of sweets and bitters, of pain and pleasure,

That we drink till the cup is drained,

Then wonder what we have gained.

Why is life so short,—why is death so long?

A warrior flushed with the heat of strife ;
A man successful in worldly life ;
An ardent lover,—a new-made wife ;
A babe scarce conscious of life's sweet breath ;
All these are caught in the whirl of death,—
 And they pass out of sight
 Like thin clouds in the night ;
And we know not whither they scatter or throng.
Why is life so short,—why is death so long ?

Will none reply to my crying soul ?
O passionate sea-waves, ye that roll
At beck and call of the great free winds,
Are ye too slaves of the death that blinds
 With bitter sham of a healing sleep ?
O restless children of the deep
 You answer but with a hollow sigh !
Ah, then are there none that can make reply,—
None that can say, 'We never die ?'

I hear the song of the loving wind,
 He that is likest to my own mind,—
I cry to him, Tell me, brother and friend,
 Is your free life without end ?

When you have blown over the seas,
And sported amidst the trees,
Will ever your heart-pulse cease ?
No ? Your life is eternal ? Then why
Should men and women be doomed to die ?



LOVE SUPREME.

As the birth of a flower
From invisible seed,
As the musical power
Of the wind through a reed,
Love's ways are mysterious and dark, but delight
is their meed.

So let us love on,
Taking sweets as we may,
For when Summer is gone
Then the birds fly away,
And the leaves on the branches grow restless, and
nothing will stay.

There is love all around
On the earth, in the sky,
And never a sound
But of love passes by,
For love is the lord of all living, both lowly and
high.

AN APPEAL.

I wish the world were burning,
I wish that life were fire,
That all my body's yearning,
That all my soul's desire
For love of one sweet woman
Might flame to space above.
Ah, no ! I am but human,
I only long for love.

Now that my life is moonless,
And kissed of no fair star ;
Now that my heart is tuneless,
And all its singings jar,
I long for love's day-breaking
To rise above my night,
And at my soul's awaking
To fill me with sweet light.

O you that my soul cries to,
Will you not turn and hear?
Shall my soul never rise to
A height your soul may near?
That we may soar together
Into some unknown sky,
Through fair, unclouded weather,
Where love may never die.

Where you shall be the Summer,
And I shall be the rain,
To gladden each new-comer,
And wash his heart of pain.
Then would our lives have sweetness
And bring forth deathless flowers,
Then would the world's completeness
Be vague compared to ours.

O answer, sweet my lover;
Take all my heart to you,
And make your heart its cover,
That none may peer there-through,—
That you alone may know it—
Its every shade and tone.
O take me, not as poet,
But lover all your own!

A SONG OF HARMONY.

I hear a chorus of voices
Singing a song of the earth,
A new song born of the fresh sweet mirth
Of the fields, in the month that rejoices
With burden of new flower-birth.

They sing of the loving and mating,
Joyful and sweet for an hour,
Of bird with bird, and of flower with flower,
When the day for the night is waiting,
And the sun seeks rest in his bower.

These voices singing and singing,
Praise that the earth is all fair—
With its lands and seas, and the life that is there,—
And call me to join them in ringing
The love of the world through the air.

I send my song with them flying,
Seeking the soul of mankind—
A stray leaf caught in the net of the wind,
And borne to where Nature is sighing
For love of the human mind.



ALL FOR LOVE.

What man is he who would not dare,
Seeing his loved one lost,
The blackest winds of life to bear,
On cruel world-waves tossed,
To save her—recking not the cost—
So she be once more fair ?

What man is he who would not tread
The burning floors of Hell,
To snatch his love back from the dead
With some strong passion-spell ;
Were even Death an endless well
With God to guard its head ?

If such there be—I am not he.
Love, O my love, look back !
I'll break whatever chains may be

And follow on your track ;
Yea, though my life be bound and black,
You shall at least be free.

Sweet, curse not all your life with chains,
Which one swift word might break ;
Life has its meed enough of pains,
Heed me for your soul's sake !
And all my life can give you—take.
Loving at least remains !



A POET'S LIFE.

My life is sweet with love ; my days
Are spent among the hidden ways
Of dreamy loveliness, and I
Am like the birds that soar on high,
Then swoop to earth to gladden it
With singing echoes, as they flit.

The beating pulse of some soft wind
Bears all the tremors of my mind,
And, sweeping through the human crowd,
Delights it, as some golden cloud
That peeps from heaven, while my song
Grows sweeter as it sweeps along.

In that grey hour when dreams are born,
Between the midnight and the morn,
I am most happy, for my life
Is freed from all the common strife ;
And lovely fancies play around,
And music is in every sound.

But in the crimson glow of day,
When I must walk the common way,
My yearning soul goes forth to find
Some thing round which itself can wind,
To shew to men what beauties can
Lie hidden in the soul of man.

Some weep that love and life are strong ;
I gladly hail them with a song.
Some wail that love has left the world,
That now is beauty's banner furled.
To me the world is wondrous fair,
With love and beauty everywhere.

I love the earth, the sky and sea,
And all mankind, for all to me
Form one divine and lovely whole ;
No meanest thing without a soul ;
The flowers that grow from out the sod,
The sun and man alike are God.

—•••—

BROKEN LOVE.

O Sweet, my Sweet, what bitter thing
Has come between us to divide
Thy love from mine? Whose cruel sting
Has fallen on us like a tide
Of unexpected sorrowing?

My life was gladder than the flowers
That herald Spring, before this blight
Came darkening all the lovelit hours,
And making life an endless night,
Unlit of moon, uncooled of showers.

Ah Sweet, what bitter days are these
That I must pass unseen of thee?
Like seas unkissed of any breeze
On burning days, my heart will be,
With no word from thy lips to ease.

Love never could have seen this thing,
Nor heard the word that told of it,
Else he had swiftly taken wing
Towards us, and he had been no whit
Less dear for his brief wandering.

The flowers in the meadows sleep,
The birds give out no joyous lay,
The wind is whistling down the steep
Hill-sides, and no sun shines to-day ;
For Love being late to save, must weep.

My songs that were my spirit's food,
Are ye all silent to me now ?
Has life no joy, nor any good
To send through ye ? Come bind my brow
With wreath of leaves from Willow-wood.



BIRD-MESSAGES:

Love and be free : the song-birds said,
As they went circling overhead.

The breezes rising from the sea
Are free to kiss each flowering tree.
The languid water-lilies wed
Each other on their smooth soft bed.
The humble field-flowers even shed
A scent of love. Then will not 'ye
Love and be free ?

When last year's fruits and flowers are dead,
The new year with new birth is fed ;
Thus beauty and free love shall be
The things to feed Eternity.
Then will not ye till life be fled
Love and be free ?

MY LADY.

My lady sat on a grassy glade ;
The sun's warm kiss was set on her lips,
Where love's own smile ever dances and dips,
Like shadows on streams of the trees wind-swayed.
I sat beside her, and wove her songs
With the flowers and leaves of her heart and mine,
Till ran through her frame like a fiery wine
That exquisite thrill that to love belongs.
We sat there together, till night and day
Were one in that fair sweet time of love,
And the singing of birds as they sailed above,
Bore word of our love over-sea away.

*O loves that live and loves that die,
Are you worth the memory ?*

My lady sat on a river bank,
Where the musical waters flowed at her feet,
And sang mysterious songs so sweet,
Which into her innermost soul she drank.

Another sat by her, no longer I
Was the sun of her heaven, whose fluctuant rays
Gave light to her soul in the past love-days ;
Another shone now in her spirit's sky.
Long stayed they together, so lovingly glad,
Till their two souls grew to one beautiful whole ;
But no thought of me through her mind there stole,
Nor knew she that life could be hollow or sad.

*O loves that live and loves that die
Are you worth the memory ?*

My lady lies on a black-draped bier ;
Her cheek is white as a field of snow ;
And the sun may smile, and the waters flow,
And love may sing, but she may not hear.
What matters now that her young sweet soul
Was mine for a time, till it sailed apart
And left me a flowerless waste for a heart ?
What matters it now when the death-bells toll ?
The earth will soon cover my lady fair ;
Her soul already is lost in the One ;
But her body shall live for the joy of the sun,
And flowers shall grow from her golden hair.

*O loves that live and loves that die
Are you worth the memory ?*

BIRDS.

We soar upon the breeze,
And fill the air with song ;
We slowly sail along
The waves of sleepy seas,
And find our homes among
The boughs of sun-kissed trees.

Come, maidens, will not you
Take part with us and sing,
As heedlessly we wing
Over the boundless blue ?
Love has no sweeter thing
To give, or say, or do.

ONE HOUR OF LOVE.

One hour of love were worth a whole
Eternity of loveless dole ;
For that I'd even blind my eyes
To all the wonders of the skies ;
I would not hear the waves that roll
And sing from icy pole to pole,
Or rapture of the wind's great soul,
If only in my life would rise

One hour of love !

One hour of love ! For that I'd give
All things that make it joy to live ;
I'd hear no bird in any tree,
For me all flowers might cease to be ;
The rivers for their streams might grieve,
The sea no rivers might receive ;
The sun and moon might take their leave ;
And I'd not care, were there for me

One hour of love !

THE TRUE LIFE.

I.

I lift the veil of passion from my soul,
And leave its native loveliness all bare ;
And I am dazed to see it is so fair :
No wild distortions—not one ugly mole
Is there to mar the beauty of the whole.
'Tis strange ! for men are crying everywhere
That each man's soul is born in dark despair,
With no pure joy to find till past death's goal.

O lovely soul of man and nature !—breath
And being of the Universe !—thou One !
How men belie thee with their talk of death,
And strange new life for thee when this is done.
They know thee not for God, but build on faith
A shadowy godhead, like a fog-hid sun !

II.

Why should I strive to lift my soul above
The free delights of all this lovely world ?
For joys, like leaves in sweet confusion hurled
On deathless winds of universal love,
Fall thick around, as in a full-flowered grove.
My soul spreads gladly, like a sail unfurled
To the free wind, and makes the dream-forms
 curled
Around grow real with very joy thereof.

Blend soul with sense, O men, like sky with sea,
And lave your lives with beauty of all things !
What greater joy can be than that which springs
From blending with the world-soul's harmony,
Glad with a sense of living, full and free,
And taking sweet of every joy life brings ?

SNOW SONG.

O soft white flakes of snow,
What are you telling now?
What message of peace from what unknown sky
Do you bring to us here below?

O beautiful snow, as you fall,
Spreading a pure white pall
O'er the darkened earth, as if you would try
To blot out the sins of all,

It seems that I hear you say,
In your calm and silent way,
That you come down here from your cloud-land
home
To gladden and make us gay.

Sweet snow, were I pure like you,
I would make the world know me, too ;
I would sing like a lark beneath Heaven's high
dome,
Then fade away into the blue.

But my song should be one to last
More than all the songs of the past ;
It should stir men's souls with a perfect love,
And be heard o'er the thunder's blast.

But, alas ! I am frail at the best,
Though love is supreme in my breast,
And my thoughts wing out to the heavens above
To find me a way to rest.

O delicate flakes of snow,
I would that the sun's warm glow
Could melt me away into nothingness,
As it melts you away even now.

For I find that I live in vain,
That my love is but sweetened pain ;
And all my dreaming of fame and success
But a link in a broken chain !

Then, beautiful snow, fall on ;
I would that the sun were gone,
That white and pure you might ever lie
For the weary to gaze upon.

For though you come down from afar,
I know you—each flake—what you are,
And welcome you here as a child of the sky
With a promise of rest from some star!



FIRST LONGING.

O that I were some sweet and swift desire,
That, like a drifted seed, I might be swept
Upon love's fitful breeze, till I had crept
Into thy heart, all potent as quick fire,
And taken root, that with my growth a higher
And richer life might shed its fruits on thee,
While through the contact of thy soul with me,
I might with all thy loveliness respire.

Then would I grow to glad reality,
And bear thee joy of all thy labouring,
And I would make the rich fair soul of thee,
Whereon I bloomed, a deathless, beauteous thing,
That in the blind unknown Eternity,
It might have power above the rest to wing !

LOVE'S SUMMER-TIME.

As when upon the traveller's weary sight,
That o'er a vast and arid desert plain
Has sought some oasis, but long in vain,
There breaks at length a stream ice-clear and
bright,
So do thy words all fruitful of delight,
Break silence on mine ear, and there remain
Till all my soul is full of their refrain,
And I am borne to passion's topmost height.

For this is now the summer of my love,
When all sweet thoughts are in their fullest
bloom,
And now my heart is feathered like a dove,
To keep within the warmth that there finds room,
And with its wings it soars to realms, whereof
Thy words are stars that do my life illum.

IN THE BREAKERS.

As when a wild and tempest-stricken sea
Breaks foaming, like a cagèd lioness,
Against the rocks, and is thrown back by stress
Of its own fury, thus it is with me,
Whose maddening passion, all unfelt by thee,
Is beaten back by thy indifference
Upon my tideless soul, till more intense
Becomes the inward strife—while thou art free.

O Sweet, in thy unchanging granite heart
Make me a cleft, through which I may attain
Some fair and tranquil resting place apart
From all the túrmoil of Desire's domain,
Where I may learn thy love-inspiring art,
And having learnt, may use it not in vain !

RESIGNATION.

Thought came to me with subtle speech, and said :
“ Rise up, that I may bear thee on my wings
To higher realms, whereof the poet sings ;
Where love is like a fair and flower-sweet glade,
In all the sunshine of the soul arrayed ;
Where rich delight grows out of all sweet things ;
Where hearts find rest from weary wanderings,
And grief and passion in one grave are laid.”

I answered Thought : “ I cannot go with thee,
For Love holds me in thrall, and I must wait
Until these bonds are broken, when new life
Will come with tearless hope and set me free.”
Thus we must stand outside the house of Fate,
Nor seek to enter through the gates of strife.

FRUITLESS SINGING.

I went to her I love and gave a song,
Which breathed my soul's best accents in its
strain,
That she might bear me pity for my pain,
That one sweet wave might waft our souls along.
She only smiled, and cast her eyes among
The trackless labyrinths of Love's domain,
And said : " Thou sendest forth thy song in vain ;
To me Love's language is an unknown tongue."

Then I went back and made my heart a grave,
Wherein to bury all the hopes now dead ;
And sowed above it seeds of sweetest flowers,
That men might pass, and see not that I gave
The fairest hopes of life a barren bed,
Unwept by all, save by the sleepless Hours.

TO EROS.

Up what steep heights and through what wooded
ways

Must my feet tread, O Love, ere I reach thee ?
Must I o'erleap the limits of the sea,
And stay the sun from sinking with its rays—
Making one golden day of all the days?
I fain would know what is thy will of me,
And I will strive—however hard it be—
To win thy grace, and on thy god-head gaze.

O Love, I think that only now I know
How high and how inscrutable thou art ;
For hitherto I took my way too low,
Led only by the yearnings of my heart ;
But now *her* soul on mine has shed its glow,
And so I know thee—and await my part.

HYMN TO FREEDOM.

Great and munificent mother of lands,
Hear us, O hear !
Thee-ward we stretch forth our heavy-chained
hands
Still without fear ;
Knowing thee ready to help and to save,
Heedless of kings—
Kings that but glitter and break like a wave—
Hawks without wings.
Tyranny totters and falls like a tower
Weak at its base ;
Freedom, our mother, thou only art power,
Greater for grace.
Creedless we give as a god to thee prayers,
Strong as a wind ;
Freedom, our God ever great, not as theirs
Powerless and blind,

Blind as the night with the snow in her eyes,

The wind in her hair ;

Powerless as tyrants when freemen arise

To die or to dare.

Hear us, O mother, give ear to our cry ;

Here at thy feet,

Fettered and lowly we call to thee high,

Answer us, Sweet !

Make all the nations republic and free,

Free as a whole ;

Let them have love and desire of thee,

Strong as thy soul.

Give them thy word, with a splendour of light

Killing the sun ;

Link them with love, and with rivets of right

Make them as one.

*(Written on hearing of Russia's declaration of war
against Turkey, April, 1877.)*



SONG.

On an island of rich delight
Away in a sea of dreams,
Full many a time
In the pale moon's prime,
I have seen a beautiful sprite
Sitting alone by the streams.

She wanders and ever sings
In glad mellifluous tones,
Till the air around
Is alive with sound,
And the song-birds flutter their wings,
And gather from all the zones.

Her song is a burden of love
That echoes from tree to tree,
And the streams below
Join songs as they flow
With the flowers that bloom above ;
For the sprite of the woods is she.

LOVE AND SONG.

Love came over the sea, and said :
“ Weave me a song with a subtle thread,
With which I may girdle the hearts of men.

Take wing,
And sing.

Sing of the passionate nights and days,
When I lured the world with my rapturous ways ;
Let it bring
Once again to the world what it thrilled with
then ! ”

So I took from my heart a sigh,
And laughter I took from a heart near by,
And wove them together and made a song.

There stirred
A bird
Out of a brake on a meadow fair,
And bore it along through the silent air.

Was it heard ?
Has it girdled the heart of the worldly throng ?

UNDER THE MOON.

The moon had risen, and its silver light
Fell on my love and me in that green grove,
While at that moment came between us Love,
Who joined our hands with his sweet subtle might,
And made us fairer in each other's sight.
Then rose within us longings, which we strove
To stifle, but too strong the chain Love wove
Around us ;—and the moon was fair that night.

The earth was still ; the leaves above us laughed.
We knew not all our love, until one burst
Of rapturous music fell upon the air.
We held our breath, and listened ; then we
quaffed
The wine Love brought to slake our soul's strong
thirst.
What could we else ? Love had us in his lair.

BEAUTY-WORSHIP.

I looked upon my love with longing gaze,
Till all the fairness of her body fell
Upon my sight, and bound me with its spell.
Then all the wonder of the summer days,
Reflected in the sun-god's golden rays,
Burst into loveliness unspeakable,
And gladness greater than in Heaven or Hell
Ran through my soul in all its winding ways.

But cruel are the gods and their decrees,
For, seeing that my one great living joy
Lay in my lady's blossoming white breast
And perfect face and limbs, they sent disease
To ravage all her beauty and destroy
My love of her. Say, do the gods know best ?

L'AMOUR EST MORT VIVE L'AMOUR.

The night is dark and drear outside,
The wind and rain are combating ;
But here within is nought but gloom
And silence, as when shadows glide.
For here my love—a lifeless thing—
Lies now before me in this room.

As night-dew falls upon the grass
So lightly that no mite is stirred,
Her fair head drooped upon her breast ;
As whispers through the bushes pass
Up skywards from some dying bird,
Her soul's last cadence sank to rest.

Yet as I stand beside the bed,
And only my own breathing hear,
And watch, like one gone wandering,
The marble features of the dead,
My eyes are heavy with no tear.
Ah, God ! Why hast thou done this thing ?

The earth was fairer for her smile ;
Her lips are cold as gránite now,—
The heaven of her eyes is dark,
(Love lasted but a little while.)
And gone her majesty of brow,
And grace of limbs, now cold and stark.

Those lips that I have kissed and kissed
For love's delight, through many an hour,
Shall they give sweet not any more ?
And must I grieve some rapture missed
Of limbs more fair than any flower ?
(Ah Death, thy ways are hard and sore !)

O love, that I have loved these years,
When you are laid within the grave,
And on your breast the cold earth falls,
Will you look up to me for tears ?
Or will Death, like a flooding wave,
Sweep love from out your prison walls ?

Farewell my love, and love of you.
Our brief love-season has gone past,
And left its fragrance of dead flowers.
Shall I find any love anew ?
Each Spring brings flowers as fair as last ;
Each year can count as many hours !

SPRING SONG.

The woods are stirred by awakened Spring ;
The green buds sprout upon every tree ;
The young birds, proud of their strength of wing,
Lift up their throats to the air and sing
Their new found ecstacy.

The wild flowers wake from their winter sleep,
And ope their eyes to the glad new sun ;
The glittering moths from their shells do creep,
And out on the lawns the young herds leap
For gladness as they run.

Is this not a season for you and me
To open our hearts, as the roses do,
When they are wooed by the amorous bee ?
O let us love, that the Spring may see,
And know *our* gladness too !

IDEAL LIFE.

Hidden away in my soul,
Where only myself can see,
Where the windings of thought unroll,
Is the one sweet spot that is free,—
Free as the unknown seas,
Or the skies that know no breeze.

Rich with the fragrance of flowers
Is that which the world sees not ;
But brief, as the sun between showers,
Are the glimpses I have of that spot,—
There where I hide from pain,
There where I break love's chain.

Still, there is something there—
A being wrought out of my dream,
So pure and so wondrous fair,
Like a part of the Soul supreme.
Filling my heart with desire,
Raising me, bearing me higher.

TO A MODERN SIREN.

These are the realms of love. What do you
here?

Do you come weeping, and with humble mien
Repentant? No. I see beneath each tear
The silent laughter of your eyes, and keen
Proud curling of your lip. Go hence! Love's
dew

Is falling now. This is no place for you.

Return along the green and shady lanes,
That were defiled being trodden by your feet;
Return and tell the world that here no chains
Can bind to what is false, though seeming sweet.
Go—pluck your poppies—scatter them anew,
But come not here; this is no place for you.

